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ABSTRACT

Discussed in this report is a geriatric clinical training model for social workers and students dealing with Alzheimer patients and family caregivers. The project was conceived to develop student interest and competence to work in this specialized area. One goal was to incorporate relevant components in the social work curriculum in both classroom and fieldwork. Another goal was to develop a model for innovative, creative social work practice strategies for Alzheimer patients and their caregivers at the different stages of the disease with individuals, groups, and the community. This multidisciplinary project directly financed and sponsored three social work students each year (totalling nine students over the grant period), and several of them maintained positions in the field following graduation. The project modified and changed many stereotypes and myths about the Alzheimer patient population in the attitudes of those professionals working with them. Some research instruments were developed for testing the change, particularly for student attitudes. Students were able to learn to work collaboratively with interdisciplinary personnel and to gain some understanding of their specific distinctive roles on the team. Other disciplines were able to appreciate and better understand the social work function. The project had a broad effect in communicating some of its results and consequences via presentations at regional and national conferences. (Author/SM)

ED306899

# Hunter College School of Social Work

AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

Part A

Title of the Project: A Geriatric Clinical Training Model for Social Workers/Students Working with the Alzheimer Patient and Family Caregiver(s)

Institution: Hunter College School of Social Work in collaboration with the Long Island Jewish Hospital Medical Center

Project Contact Information: Reva Fine Holtzman, DSW, Professor, Director of the Project

Funding Agency: National Institute of Mental Health

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(From September 1986-June 1989)

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## AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory is a two-year project seeking to establish and test a model system for collecting and disseminating information on model programs at AASCU-member institutions--375 of the public four-year colleges and universities in the United States.

The four objectives of the project are:

- To increase the information on model programs available to all institutions through the ERIC system
- To encourage the use of the ERIC system by AASCU institutions
- To improve AASCU's ability to know about, and share information on, activities at member institutions, and
- To test a model for collaboration with ERIC that other national organizations might adopt.

The AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project is funded with a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, in collaboration with the ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at The George Washington University.

Hunter College School of Social Work

AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

Part A

Abstract

Social work practice with the elderly, particularly those who are patients with the senile dementia Alzheimer type (SDAT) and their caregivers/especially family members, present many dilemmas both in the social work intervention to develop relevant, creative strategies as well as in social work education, to interest, recruit, and educate appropriately social work students for this demanding, difficult, yet rewarding practice area.

This project was conceived, to develop student interest and competence to work in this specialized area. The NIMH grant provided trainee stipends/ scholarships for three social work graduate students for each of the three years of the project's duration. In addition, through its funding, the grant financed in part the services, through a sub-contract with Long Island Jewish Hospital Medical Center, the salary of a qualified, experienced social work field instructor.

With a primary focus, the education of social work students, a goal was to incorporate relevant components in the social work curriculum, in both class and field. The other major part of the project was designed to develop a model for innovative, creative social work practice strategies for Alzheimer patients, as well as with their caregivers, at the different stages of the disease (early, middle, end), with individuals, groups and the community.

The project modified and changed many stereotypes and myths about the Alzheimer patient population in the attitudes of those professionals working with this most specialized vulnerable group. Some research instruments were developed for testing the change particularly for student attitudes.

AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

Introduction

As noted in the Abstract, this project focused on both educationally as well as innovative practice strategies for social work working with the vulnerable Alzheimer patient population and their family and other caregivers. There had been extensive literature review in setting up our proposal, in which we identified some of the basic studies on the demographics of Alzheimers, some issues and questions about the types of dementia and some of the difficulty in effectively diagnosing Alzheimers (Dr. Siegfried Kra's Aging Myths: Reversal Causes of Mind and Memory Loss; Gary McKhane, MD et al., "Clinical Diagnosis of Alzheimers Disease"; reports of NIMCDS and AADRA and the Department of Health and Human Service Task Force on Alzheimers Disease; Dr. Barry Reisberg, Alzheimer Disease) Robert Butler's Why Survive, etc, as well as the particular literature geared to the family caregivers and the particular pressures on them (Shelley S. Rubin, Family Caregivers: Invisible Network of Long Term Care; Marie Weil and James M. Karla, Case Management in Human Services Practices; Zarit and Orr, The Hidden Victims of Alzheimers Disease: Families Under Stress; Goodman's, Aging Parents: Whose Responsibility?, etc.). AADRA has been very much involved in this issue and has published studies, brochures and literature for both the professional and the lay persons for better interpretation of Alzheimers' disease.

Nonetheless, in practice there was limited attention given to the importance of the needs of this population and service provided.

AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

Background

As noted above in both the Abstract and Introduction, the Hunter School of Social Work identified the need for recruitment of a qualified cadre of social work students for a career interest and specialty to work in this area. Most students consider the geriatric population the least interesting because they believe there is less satisfaction/progress/movement with this type of patient; although there is some recognition for the supportive counseling given to the caregivers, who are so needy. The School of Social Work, in addition to trying to generate interest, recruit, and educate appropriately graduate social work students, recognized there was the need for other creative social work interventive strategies for both the caregiver, as well as the patient, and in particular determine what the differentials might be at different stages of the disease, since patients experience differential levels of psychosocial functioning from the onset through the middle of this terminal phase.

The Long Island Jewish Hospital Complex was a most appropriate institution for collaboration, because of our on-going joint educational and practice relationship. Over the many years, we assign many students to their own innovative project, the Queens Field Instructional Center. In addition, the Hospital Complex had satellite-programs related to this problem area, ie., in-patient, out-patient, in the medical and psychiatric hospital; (Hillside), the Geriatric Center, some day treatment centers, sponsored by the YMHA of Samuel Fields YMHA in a nearby community.

Through its medical program, the hospital had a staff of geriatricians and gerineurologists and psychiatrists, pursuing this subject of inquiry, engaging in special projects with these patients. Therefore, this was a fertile, rich ground upon which we could initiate our project. Support was given by both the School's administration (the Dean), as well as the administrative social service staff of the Hospital Complex.

AASCU/ERIC Model Programs Inventory Project

Description of the Project or Program

As noted in the prior sections, the target population of this special grant, were Alzheimer patients and the family caregiver(s). The primary focus was on both (1) educational issues to interest, recruit, and maintain social work students to work in this program; and (2) designing a model for social work in providing services to this most vulnerable and growing population.

The program goals were therefore to develop special educational content for student social work learning around this issue and delivery of services, as well as to incorporate some of this content and knowledge and practice skills into the overall social work education curriculum in both class and field. The Long Island Jewish Hospital Medical Complex collaborated with the School of Social Work. This in itself was an important dimension to have an educational and service delivery institution work closely with the educational institution around a project of mutual interest. Both the school and the hospital had concern for the general gerontological population and most particularly was concerned about the Alzheimer disease.

The multi-disciplinary nature of the project was fostered by virtue of the fact that the student field placements were in a range of agencies, sponsored by the Long Island Jewish Hospital Medical Center, so that students learned to work collaboratively with other disciplines. In addition, the specialists in these various programs provided an excellent orientation program in the field for the students There was a considerable reciprocity and exchange between the Hunter College School of Social Work and the Hospital Complex and its satellite programs.

In meeting the 2nd goal, the basic rationale of the project was an attempt to improve the quality of life of the Alzheimer patient and to be supportive to the family caregivers. This involved social work interventions on an individual, one-to-one counseling basis; as well as developing creative, special group processes and different group engagements for the Alzheimer patient at their different stages of the illness; as well as provide supportive groups to family and other caregivers as appropriate. In addition, there was considerable emphasis on the community and to develop relevant community networking as well as heavy emphasis on advocacy and entitlements for the impaired elderly and their caregivers.

Funding was sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health [redacted] which provided a grant of slightly over $40,000 a year for a three year period, which included both stipends for three students each year, as well as tuition waivers at the School

of Social Work. Money was also provided, on a subcontract basis, to pay for part of the salary of a social work staff supervisor at the Hospital, who was a most qualified field instructor for the three students each year.

At the present time, March 1989, the project is in its last year of operation and as will be noted later, has made significant contributions to the field as well as initiating some research studies.

Staffing; the project director, who designed the initial proposal in collaboration with Hospital social service personnel, served as Project Director/Principal Investigator. A faculty advisor also was assigned to the three students (part of the School's normal procedure). There was close and active work relationships between the field instructor, faculty advisor, Project Director as well as the Director of Training at the Hospital and the Director of Social Work Services. The Project Director had an Advisory Committee established up which was active during the three years of the project's duration, to make suggestions and review the project status and progress. This Advisory Committee consisted of the major figures in the project namely the Project Director, the field instructor, the faculty advisor, the Director of Training, the Director of Social Work Services at the Hospital as well as some of the relevant supervisors of some satellite programs utilized by the project. The latter was important not only for input and feedback from the service delivery centers, but also active for involvement in the educational principles and criteria for selection of assignments for the students and to facilitate cooperation between all members working together.

RESULTS

The results of this three year project were most satisfactory and productive. The major goals of the project were as follows:

Educational Program. (Recruitment, Curriculum Content)

The project directly financed and sponsored three social work students each year (a total of nine students over the three year period). This consisted of male and female 1st and 2nd year casework and group work majors with a range of ethnic backgrounds (black, and Asian). Most important was that these students maintained their interest in the field of gerontology, and particularly in working with Alzheimer's. Several of them upon their graduation maintained positions in this field, one being employed by the cooperating agency, Long Island Jewish Hospital Medical Center; another being employed by a related agency; and some of the first year students maintained their interest by moving on in 2nd year to experiences in hospitals where part of the load was again gerontology. Therefore, we believe we accomplished the goal of interest and recruitment of qualified social workers.

Although there were only nine students, we believe we had a "ripple" effect in that not only did these students present at several general student meetings about their project, at the Queens Field Instructional Center (which comprises many settings) but in addition the students presented illustrations in their classes at the School, in both Methods class, Social Policy, Research, etc. The agency field instructor was also invited two years, to teach one of the sessions of the Human Growth and Social Behavior course on the Dementias, and presented content from our project. Likewise, at the Queens Field Instructional Center's Advisory Committee general end of year meeting, two to three of the students each year presented a dramatic and poignant report of their experiences with these patients and family care givers, and were available for discussion and questions as to the satisfactions implicit in their work.

We also tried to involve the Chair-persons of the Human Growth and Behavior sequence, the Practice sequences, in incorporating some more of this content in some of the other courses at the School. There is one elective given in Casework with the Aged, and again, the person who normally teaches has one particular session on Alzheimer's, where again there is material presented from our project and one year the Project Director participated.

Some of the usual attitudes, myths and stereotypes about Alzheimer patients were also modified by some of these attempts at incorporation within the specific and general curriculum in both class and field.

Our own research study at the agency, testing student attitudes from our project compared to students who were placed in other divisions of the agency, were tested, and due to the strong orientation given about Alzheimer's for the grant students, there was a noticeable change in attitude about their awareness of symptomotology, social work interventions, clarification about common myths, etc.

Therefore we are satisfied that a good number of the educational objectives were accomplished, including the students being able to learn to work collaboratively with interdisciplinary personnel and to gain some understanding of their specific distinctive roles on the team. It also enabled other disciplines to appreciate and better understand the social work function.

Introduction of Creative and Innovative Social Work Strategies

The project had an opportunity to test various modalities for work with patients, ranging from the individual 1-to-1 counseling on a supportive level both with the patient and the family, but also testing a range of creative group modalities using a variety of different techniques such as reminiscence, art (using collages of experiences), group discussion, and other dynamic group processes to which the group could relate. Poems were utilized, as well as daily experiences and other activities such as music, the human-animal bond concept, etc. It was recognized that while the attention span, certainly in the middle phase and end phase for these patients was limited, our students were challenged and rewarded by being able to introduce some of the specific group processes that had a salutary effect on their patients and enabled them to cope better with some of their limited and impaired faculties; and also was important in helping them deal with the hospital or nursing home system situation. The students also took on a role of advocacy, utilizing entitlements in meeting needs, and became aware of social policy gaps.

By helping the patients in the group process, even for a limited time, and maintaining their quality of life, and stabilizing some of the situations and creating some degree, though limited, of interaction among members of the group, the caregivers gained some indirect support from observing some differences in the patients.

Intensive dynamic case management was heavily used with both patients and caregivers. Communication with other hospital personnel involved in the patient's care was also emphasized.

In addition, this project demonstrated its awareness of community relationships working actively with the New York City Chapter and Long Island Chapter of ADRA, having students attend the Regional Conference sponsored by ADRA at Columbia University for the three years that the project was in force. Considerable networking with a range of community services also occurred.

The project also had a broader effect in communicating some of its results and consequences by presenting at regional and national conferences, such as the New York State Social Work Education conference (where the first year of the project, a second year student accompanied two of the faculty members to present, with an audio-visual presentation) and then in follow up years, presenting at the Council on Social Work Education's Annual Program Meeting in 1987 and 1988, and then at the NASW National Symposium in Philadelphia in 1988, when a student again accompanied two of the faculty and hospital presenting. Likewise, a paper was presented at the Group Work Symposium in the Fall of 1988 where another student had an opportunity to present with faculty.

We plan to submit the content we presented at these different conferences for publication in a professional Journal.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

We believe this program, in the way it was developed and organized, could be easily replicated in other institutions and programs. In addition, we are so enthusiastic about the work that was accomplished that we are submitting other proposals for further funding to continue the life of the project. We expect that there might be and will be further research techniques built in to the future proposals for the ongoing nature of the project so that there can be further testing of the outcomes of the type of strategies utilized.

We plan to introduce other dimensions into the project, such as accentuating the use of the Human-animal Companion Bond concept in work with this group of elderly persons to further establish communication and facilitate some level of intervention and reaching out to them.

We recognize further attention needs to be given to the coordination of services that are available for Alzheimer patients and caregivers.

We are very gratified with the results of the project, both in terms of its progress for recruitment and retention of qualified social work students to take on a career in this area, as well as to demonstrate strategies for social work intervention.

gz : RFH